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Apr 11 28, 1958

TO: The Secretary

FROM: C. Burke Elbrick, EUR

THROUGH: S/S

SUBJECT: Soviet Charges of Intusion into Soviet Air Space
by US Military Aircraft

CERNOLOGY

On March 6 the Soviet Ambassador, calling to deliver a letter from Bulganin to President Eisenhower, left with you a long aide memoire (Tab A) charging that "according to precisely established data on March 2, 1958 at 4:05 hours Moscow time, an American military jet aircraft, having appeared from the direction of the Sea of Japan, violated the state border of the Soviet Union in the area of the settlement of Velikaya-Kema and penetrated into the air space of the Soviet Union, remaining over its territory for a considerable period of time". The aide memoire went on at some length to say that this intrusion was "an attempt to undermine the efforts aimed at convening (a Summit) meeting ... and upsetting Soviet-American relations". In this connection reference was made to the very dangerous character of such violation "since as has been reported, American military planes make flights around the clock over many countries of the world carrying thermo-nuclear bombs".

After checking with Defense, EUR prepared an aide memoire (Tab B) stating that "a thorough investigation has been conducted and it has been determined that at the time cited there were no US military aircraft in the vicinity of the place mentioned in the Soviet aide memoire either over or outside Soviet territory". The aide memoire concluded: "The Soviet Government may be sure that the US Government fully shares its expressed concern that incidents be prevented which might impair relations between the two countries." You handed this reply to the Soviet Ambassador on March 31, adding orally that "we were giving renewed instructions to military personnel enjoining them to adhere strictly to our regulations".

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prohibiting US aircraft from approaching Soviet territory.

On April 21 the Soviet Embassy delivered by messenger a note in effect rejecting the denial in the US aide memoire of March 31 (Tab C). The note accused the Department of State of attempting "to deny the fact of an American military aircraft having violated the Soviet border". Reiterating that "the Soviet Government has at its disposal carefully verified data on this violation, the reliability of which leaves no room for doubt", the note added two new elements not appearing in the original aide memoire. The plane is identified as "an American military reconnaissance aircraft of the Lockheed U-2 type" and the time of penetration specified as four hours and six minutes, that is from 4:05 a.m. to 8:11 a.m., Moscow time, on March 2.

A suggested reply to the Soviet Embassy reiterating our denial of the alleged violation is attached (Tab D).

DISCUSSION:

As you will recall, my memorandum to you of March 25 estimated that the terms of the original aide memoire and various items from the Soviet press indicated that a major propaganda campaign was in the making. On April 18, in fact, the Soviet Ambassador called for a special meeting of the Security Council and in that forum on April 21 levelled charges against SAC air operations as a threat to the peace. Subsequently, the Rumanian Foreign Minister on April 23 called in our Minister in Bucharest and reiterated the Soviet charges against SAC, moving the geographic area concept closer to the Soviet border by referring specifically to flights over Western European countries. It seems likely that other satellite governments will follow suit. In due course, with timing coordinated to developments in the Security Council and in the Summit preparatory talks, we would expect the campaign to be further developed in an effort to propagate the concept of American military aircraft carrying thermo-nuclear bombs having actually violated the Soviet borders. In this connection the correspondence with respect to the alleged violation of Soviet air space will probably be used to support a new phase of the campaign, and the Soviets will probably present alleged "evidence" in an attempt to prove the intrusion charge.

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We have already alerted the US information agencies to be prepared to move promptly to discredit such charges and documentation by reference to previous Soviet charges and fabricated "evidence" such as figured in the "germ warfare" campaign.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the attached note (Tab D) and authorize its delivery to the Soviet Embassy.